



The Board of Park and Recreation Commissioners of Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, met at the Jetton Park Indoor Pavilion located at 19000 Jetton Road, Cornelius, NC 28031 at 6 p.m. on April 10, 2018.

PRC MINUTES

April 10, 2018

ATTENDANCE

PRC Present:

Elaine Powell, Chair
Heidi Pruess – Vice-Chair
Sterling Martin
Brian Cox
Peter Engels
John Leonard
Blanche Penn
Doug Burnett
Rick Winiker

PRC Absent

Mary Foxx Johnson
Beth Cashion
Tristan McMannis
Vacancy – South 3

Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order at 6:10 p.m. by Chair Elaine Powell, which was followed by the pledge of allegiance.

Welcome and Introductions:

Chair Powell welcomed all to the April 10, 2018 Park and Recreation Commission meeting. All commissioners introduced themselves and shared the region they represent. Park and Recreation staff introduced themselves.

Chair Powell welcomed and congratulated the new Park and Recreation Director, **W. Lee Jones**. Mr. Jones was the Director of Capital Planning and has worked for the Department for 14 years. Lee accepted the position of Director of Park and Recreation effective March 28, 2018.

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Public Appearance - None

Awards and Recognition: None

PRC Chair Report

November PRC Meeting: **Motion was made** by Commissioner Cox to reschedule the November 13 PRC meeting to November 7 to be held in the Government Center prior to the PRC Annual Report presentation to the BOCC, which was seconded by Commissioner Winiker and approved unanimously.

Note: A time and room will be determined and the meeting schedule updated.

PRC Priorities

Land Acquisition: Chris Matthews gave a brief update on land acquisition for the Department:

- Closing on the Oak Hill Golf Course
- Working towards the purchase of a large parcel adjacent to West Branch Nature Preserve
- Working towards the purchase of a parcel adjacent to the Hucks Community Park near Clarks Creek Nature Preserve
- Monthly meeting to review the Department's list of prioritized parcels for Greenways, Parks and Nature Preserves
- Working towards the purchase of two parcels for Little Sugar Creek Greenway before the Polk property

Discussion followed:

- The PRC asked for information on past land acquisitions. This information would be useful when advocating.

Adequate Funding – Strategic Business Plan: Liz Morrell, Management Analyst, gave an overview of the Department's Strategic Business Plan with the goal of explaining the FY20-22 Strategic Business Planning process. Liz expressed the importance of having PRC's input in the process. The presentation concluded with an exercise to gather feedback from the PRC on what the Department is doing well and what the Department could be doing better as it pertains to NRPA's three pillars: conservation, social equity and health and wellness. Liz gathered the information from the PRC and will provide an analysis of the information at the next PRC meeting in May. (Note: The PowerPoint presentation can be view here: [FY20-22 Strategic Business Planning Kickoff](#))

Liz is currently working with the PRC Strategic Planning and Long-Range Finance sub-committee to begin effectively involving the PRC in the Departments strategic planning processes. Commissioner Pruess asked that Liz look at the PRC meeting and agenda topic schedule for

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opportunities to involve PRC. There are meetings with open opportunities for topics on the PRC schedule.

Adequate Funding – FY19 Budget Update: Lorraine Bias, Sr. Fiscal Administrator, was present to answer questions regarding staffing in the FY19 Budget and the six (6) Sheriff Deputies proposed in the FY19 Budget for added Park and Recreation security. Lorraine shared that the FY19 Budget is complete and no additional asks can be made for more staff. Discuss continued regarding use of:

Sheriff Deputies:

- The Department, in partnership with the Sheriff's Department, is working on a proposal to present to the County Manager for the use of six (6) Sheriff Deputies to be used for added security in parks and facilities located in the urban area of the park system. The cost, including salaries and equipment, of \$644,000, would come out of the FY19 Park budget, but would be managed by the Sheriff's Department.
- 1.25% of crime takes place in the park system. The Department is working together with CMPD to share crime data to more effectively place police, Park Rangers, and the proposed Deputies.
- Sheriff Deputies will have the ability to arrest on site without calling 911 for assistance, enforce ordinances and write tickets. Crime can be tracked and data collected to determine the effectiveness of this pilot program.
- In theory, both Departments are County Departments, there would be no contract, more flexibility and if this does not work out, there is a possibility that some of the investment could be returned to Park's budget.
- All other security needs for the County are centralized and managed by Asset and Facility Management (AFM). Should this proposal be approved, it will be moved to AFM. Should it not work, the Department will continue to work with AFM for security needs such as G4S. AFM will also be rebidding the contract for providing security services, which will include an addendum for security of a higher authority, such as special police. This would be plan B for addressing the security/crime problems in our parks, greenways and facilities.
- Simply stated, Leslie Johnson said the proposed pilot program is a recommendation from the Park and Recreation Department to the County Manager asking that \$650,000 be put in her budget for dedicated security in our Park and Recreation system focused on our urban parks, greenways and recreational amenities.

Commissioner Burnett asked if the crime statistics could be broken out into parking lot incidents versus incidents on the actual greenways. This would be helpful information for the PRC to have at community meetings to more accurately address citizens fears of greenways bringing more crime to an area. Director Jones responded that the Department would have an opportunity, in time, with the weekly data dumps, to provide this information. It is, however, important to note that crime on the greenways is directly reflective of the crime in the neighborhood. Greg Clemmer added that the Department and CMPD are working together to come up with better tracking of crime on the greenways but will take some time. The PRC will

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be kept informed of progress.

Chair Elaine Powell reminded Lorraine Bias the PRC would need to meet with her prior to the BOCC Budget Public Hearing to discuss PRC priorities and input from the advisory councils that would be important for the PRC to address at this hearing.

PRC Advisory Council Sub-Committee Update – Commissioner Peter Engels

Commissioner Engels informed the PRC that the Advisory Council Sub-Committee (Commissioners Pruess, Burnett and Engels) has completed a draft recommendation to restructure the Advisory Councils into four main councils that are cross cutting across all PRC priorities. The PRC will be provided with a copy of the proposal via e-mail and were asked to share with their advisory councils for feedback. The four suggested councils are:

- Land Use and Stewardship
- Programming
- Equity and Access
- Community Partnerships

This proposal can be viewed here: [2018 Draft AC Restructure Proposal](#)

Discussion followed:

- The sub-committee's proposed restructure reflected the PRC priorities and their role for advising information back to the BOCC.
- Opportunities exist on all the proposed new councils to capture specific interest from the current councils.
- The proposed restructure will offer opportunity to insure council members have a community voice for all of Mecklenburg County as opposed to a specific park region.
- Restructure so that meetings are valuable and constructive for council members and staff. Valuable feedback to the PRC and on to the BOCC as appropriate.
- Review advisory council applications and actively recruit for diversity. Improve the accessibility to vacancies and applications.
- Consider a Towns Advisory Council.
- Specialty councils could continue as it relates to providing operational feedback to staff as opposed to the PRC.
- Delay or defer expanding any of the present councils or appointing new council members until the proposal for restructuring has been shared and feedback has been gathered.

Update on Playground Rebuilds – Peter Cook

Peter Cook, Division Director of Park Operations, gave a brief update on Playground Rebuilds. Information was provided as follows:

- The Department is in its second year of playground replacements as part of the deferred maintenance program. Fourteen (14) playgrounds were replaced last year and

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thirteen (13) in the current year.

- Bids go out in July/August to the top four national playground brands. Those proposals are reviewed and a selection made.
- Playgrounds are scheduled for replacement every fifteen years. As playground designs have changed over time, there has been some citizen complaints regarding the replacement designs and style of play elements.
- To educate communities on current trends in playground designs, the Department, would like to begin sharing the playground proposals with the appropriate advisory councils and neighborhood associations to improved community involvement on the playground selection.
- Peter will provide the PRC with a current playground replacement schedule.

Director's Report

Director's Opening Comments: Director Lee Jones expressed his honor at being selected as the new Director of Park and Recreation. Lee said he has watched the Department's image improve in a positive way over the past 14 years and has been happy to have been a part of that. Lee shared some of his thoughts and plans as the new Director:

- Continue and strengthen the current level of communication with the PRC. Listen and work to address concerns from the PRC and citizens of Mecklenburg County.
- Update the 2008 Master Plan to better align with the current economy and growth.
- Take care of what we have, a community priority. Improve communication and value our more fragile and challenged neighborhoods.
- Align the Department with the mission of the County Manager and the BOCC.

NRPA: On March 29, 2018, the Department had a visit from the National Recreation and Park Association to shoot a promotional video on CAPRA (Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Associations) and the Department's tiny sensory house.

Memorial Stadium/Independence Park: RFQ is out for the planning, design and construction of the Memorial Stadium renovation. An RFQ will also go out for Independence Park in the next couple of months.

Hal Marshall Site Redevelopment: Director Jones made the PRC aware that The Foundation for the Carolinas was approached by Charlotte Center City Partners and several philanthropic individuals with the idea of looking at a conceptual strategy for the redevelopment of the Hall Marshall site to include a park. The desire from these philanthropic individuals is for a public/private partnership with Mecklenburg County and the City of Charlotte to have a park with a featured iconic sculpture and rotating art. This concept was presented at the Public Policy Workshop. The proposed park is 5 acres.

Abersham Renaming: There have been some inquiries regarding Abersham and a possible application to rename. There are some, that do not want the park named after a failed

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development. Commissioner Martin has been in contact with Kathryn Spatz of Davidson Parks and Recreation and while there has been a little talk about a renaming, an application has not been submitted.

Waymer Center Update: The Waymer Center renovation project has become more of a challenge than anticipated when it was determined that the actual roof shell is part of the structure of the building. Due to the added construction elements and environmental issues, the project is now at \$2.6 million. The goal is to have the entire building conditioned so that it can be used to its fullest extent. Once complete, Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation will manage the facility. The current plan is to move the North Meck. Senior Center program into the Waymer Center.

CMPD Press Conference: There will be a press conference on 4/11 at 10:30 a.m. regarding the Park and Recreation and CMPD Partnership regarding security. The press conference will take place at the entrance to McMullen Creek GW.

Advisory Council Appointments

Advisory council appointments were deferred pending a possible restructuring of the advisory councils by the PRC.

Consent

Motion was made by Commissioner Winiker to approve all consent items, including the PRC minutes of March 13, 2018, which was seconded by Commissioner Cox and approved unanimously.

PRC Reports and Requests:

Commissioner Penn: Attended the Waymer Center public meeting. She also visited the Shamrock Sr. Center and was very impressed with Myra Green and the programming at that location. Would like to understand the difference in the senior nutrition programming and the recreation center programming. Commissioner Penn inquired to understand Partners for Parks. Director Jones responded they are a 501-c3. Commissioner Pruess is the PRC liaison to Partners for Parks. **(Note:** The mission of Partners for Parks is to improve the quality of life for the citizens of Mecklenburg County and the surrounding region by preserving, promoting and enhancing the parks, greenways, open spaces, active play and recreational opportunities within our community.)

Commissioner Winiker: Attended the Greenway Advisory Council meeting and enjoyed a presentation by Gwen Cook which included the offer of an opportunity for input into the prioritization of greenways for the FY24-29 effort. Commissioner Winiker also recognized Commissioner Engels for his CPR lifesaving efforts at a recent road race on a man suffering from a heart attack.

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Commissioner Engels: All were invited to participate in an urban park tour, led by Partners for Parks on Saturday, May 12 beginning at 1:30 p.m. and leaving from Cordelia Park.

Commissioner Pruess: Partners for Parks is taking a serious look at an “Adopt a Park” program. Commissioner Pruess asked PRC to volunteer to participate on a committee to begin discussions on what this program would look like as it relates to Partners for Parks, Park and Recreation staff and volunteers.

Commissioner Burnett: Open Streets 704 is Sunday, April 29 and begins at 1 p.m. The route will begin in NoDa and end on The Plaza.

Commissioner Martin: Reminded all to complete the form provided to indicate their intentions to serve for the next year. This information will assist the nominating committee to be prepared with a slate of nominees at the next PRC meeting.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

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